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THE
REMONSTRANCE

M O V E D

IN THE

HOUSE of COMMONS, February 21, 1793,

AGAINST A

WAR WITH FRANCE.

By CHARLES GREY, Esq.

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REMONSTRANCE

AGAINST A

WAR WITH FRANCE:

HOUSE of COMMONS, Feb. 21, 1793.

MR. GREY moved, That an humble Address be presented to his Majesty, to assure his Majesty, that his faithful Commons, animated by a sincere and dutiful attachment to his person and Family, and to the excellent Constitution of this kingdom, as well as by an ardent zeal for the interest and honour of the Nation, will at all times be ready to support his Majesty in any measures, which, a due observance of
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the faith of treaties, the dignity of his Crown, or the security of his dominions, may compel him to undertake.

That, feeling the most earnest solicitude to avert from our country the calamities of War, by every means consistent with honour and with safety, we expressed to His Majesty, at the opening of the present session, "Our sense of the temper and prudence which had induced His Majesty to observe a strict neutrality with respect to the War on the Continent, and uniformly to abstain from any interference in the internal affairs of France;" and our hope that the steps His Majesty had taken would have the happy tendency "to render a firm and temperate conduct effectual for preserving the blessings of Peace."

That, with the deepest concern, we now find ourselves obliged to relinquish that hope, without any evidence having been produced to satisfy us, That His Majesty's Minister's have made such efforts, as it was their duty to make, and as, by His Majesty's most gracious Speech,
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we were taught to expect, for the preservation of peace:---It is no less the resolution than the duty of His Majesty's faithful Commons to second his efforts in the War thus fatally commenced, so long as it shall continue; but we deem it a duty equally incumbent upon us to solicit His Majesty's attention to those reasons or pretexts, by which his Servants have laboured to justify a conduct on their part, which we cannot but consider as having contributed, in a great measure, to produce the present rupture.

Various grounds of hostility against France have been stated, but none that appeared to us to have constituted such an urgent and imperious case of necessity, as left no room for accommodation, and made War unavoidable. The Government of France has been accused of having violated the Law of Nations, and the stipulations of existing treaties, by an attempt to deprive the Republic of the United Provinces of the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt. No evidence however has been offered to convince us, that this exclusive navigation was either in itself, or in the estimation of those who were
alone

alone interested in preserving it, of such importance, as to justify a determination in our Government to break with France on that account. If in fact the States General had shewn a disposition to defend their right by force of arms, it might have been an instance of the truest friendship, to have suggested to them, for their serious consideration, how far the assertion of this unprofitable claim might, in the present circumstances of Europe, tend to bring into hazard the most essential interests of the Republic. But when, on the contrary, it has been acknowledged that no requisition on this subject was made to his Majesty on the part of the States General, we are at a loss to comprehend on what grounds of right, or propriety, we take the lead in asserting a claim, in which we are not principals, and in which the principal party has not, as far as we know, thought it prudent or necessary to call for our interposition.

We must further remark, that the point of dispute seemed to us to have been relieved from a material part of its difficulty, by the Declaration of the Minister of Foreign Affairs in
France,

France, that the French nation gave up all pretensions to determine the question of the future Navigation of the Scheldt. Whether the terms of this declaration were perfectly satisfactory or not, they at least left the question open to pacific negociation, in which the intrinsic value of the object to any of the parties concerned in it, might have been coolly and impartially weighed against the consequences to which all of them might be exposed, by attempting to maintain it by force of arms.

We have been called upon to resist views of conquest and aggrandizement entertained by the government of France, "at all times dangerous to the general interests of Europe, but (asserted to be peculiarly so when connected with the propagation of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society."

We admit, that it is the interest and duty of every member of the Commonwealth of Europe, to support the established system and dis-

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tribution

tribution of power ; among the independent sovereignties which actually subsist, and to prevent the aggrandizement of any state, especially the most powerful, at the expence of any other ; and for the honour of his Majesty's Councils, we do most earnestly wish that his Ministers had manifested a just sense of the importance of the principle to which they now appeal in the course of late events, which seemed to us to threaten its entire destruction.

When Poland was beginning to recover from the long calamities of Anarchy, combined with Oppression ; after she had established an hereditary and limited Monarchy like our own, and was peaceably employed in settling her internal government, his Majesty's Ministers, with apparent indifference and unconcern, have seen her become the victim of the most unprovoked and unprincipled invasion, her territory over-run, her free constitution subverted, her national independence annihilated, and the general principles of the security of nations wounded through her side.

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With all these evils was France soon after threatened, and with the same appearance, either of supine indifference, or of secret approbation, his Majesty's Ministers beheld the armies of other powers (in evident concert with the oppressor of Poland), advancing to the invasion and subjugation of France, and the march of those armies distinguished from the ordinary hostilities of civilized nations, by Manifestos, which, if their principles and menaces had been carried into practice, must inevitably have produced the "return of that ferocity and barbarism in war, which a beneficent religion, and enlightened manners, and true military honour, have for a long time banished from the Christian World."

No efforts appears to have been made to check the progress of these invading armies :--- His Majesty's Ministers, under a pretended respect for the rights and independence of other Sovereigns, thought fit, at that time, to refuse even the interposition of His Majesty's councils, and good offices, to save so great and important

a portion of Europe from falling under the dominion of a foreign power. But no sooner, by an ever-memorable reverse of fortune, had France repulsed her invaders, and carried her arms into their territory, than his Majesty's Ministers, laying aside that collusive indifference which had marked their conduct during the invasion of France, began to express alarms for the general security of Europe, which, as it appears to us, they ought to have seriously felt, and might have expressed with greater justice on the previous successes of her powerful adversaries.

We will not dissemble our opinion, that the Decree of the National Convention of France, of the 19th November 1792, was in a great measure liable to the objections urged against it; but we cannot admit that a War, upon the single ground of such a decree, unaccompanied by any overt acts, by which we or our Allies might be directly attacked, would be justified as necessary and unavoidable, certainly not; unless, upon a regular demand, made by his Majesty's

jeſty's Miniſters, of explanation and ſecurity in behalf of us and our Allies, the French had re-
 fuſed to give his Maſteſty ſuch explanation and ſecurity. No ſuch demand was made. Ex-
 planations, it is true, have been received and re-
 jected. But it well deſerves to be remarked
 and remembered, that theſe explanations were
 voluntarily offered on the part of France; not
 previously demanded on ours, as undoubtedly
 they would have been, if it had ſuited the views
 of his Maſteſty's Miniſters to have acted frankly
 and honourably towards France, and not to have
 reſerved their complaints for a future period,
 when explanations, however reaſonable, might
 come too late, and hoſtilities might be una-
 voidable.

After a review of all theſe conſiderations, we
 think it neceſſary to repreſent to his Maſteſty,
 that none of the points which were in diſpute
 between his Miniſters and the government of
 France appear to us to have been incapable of
 being adjusted by negociation, except that ag-
 gravation of French ambition, which has been
 ſtated

stated to arise from the political opinions of the French Nation. These, indeed, we conceive, formed neither any desirable object of Negotiation, nor any intelligible reason for hostility. They were equally incapable of being adjusted by treaty, or of being either refuted or confirmed by the events of war.

We need not state to his Majesty's wisdom, that force can never cure delusion; and we know his Majesty's goodness too well, to suppose that he could ever entertain the idea of employing force to destroy opinions, by the extirpation of those who hold them.

The grounds upon which his Majesty's Ministers have advised him to refuse the renewal of some avowed public intercourse with the existing government of France, appeared to us neither justified by the reason of the thing itself, nor by the usage of nations, nor by any expediency arising from the present state of circumstances. In all negotiations or discussions whatsoever, of which Peace is the real object, the appearance
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of an amiable disposition, and of a readiness to offer, and to accept of pacific explanations on both sides, is as necessary and useful to ensure success, as any arguments founded on strict right. Nor can it be denied, that claims or arguments of any kind, urged in hostile or haughty language, however equitable or valid in themselves, are more likely to provoke than to conciliate the opposite party. Deploring as we have ever done, the melancholy event which has lately happened in France, it would yet have been some consolation to us, to have heard that the powerful interposition of the British Nation, on this subject, had at least been offered; although it should unfortunately have been rejected. But instead of receiving such consolation from the conduct of his Majesty's Ministers, we have seen them with extreme astonishment, employing, as an incentive to hostilities, an event which they made no effort to avert by negotiation. This inaction they could only excuse on the principle, that the internal conduct of nations, (whatever may be our opinion of its morality) was no proper ground for interposition and remonstrance

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from Foreign States, a principle from which it must still more clearly follow, that such internal conduct could never be an admissible justifying reason for war.

We cannot refrain from observing, that such frequent allusions as have been made to an event (confessedly no ground of rupture) seemed to us to have arisen from a sinister intention to derive from the humanity of Englishmen, popularity for measures which their deliberate judgment would have reprobated, and to influence the most virtuous sensibilities of his Majesty's People, into a blind and furious zeal for a war of vengeance.

His Majesty's faithful Commons, therefore, though always determined to support his Majesty with vigour and cordiality, in the exertions necessary for the defence of his kingdoms, yet feel that they are equally bound by their duty to his Majesty and to their fellow subjects, to declare, in the most solemn manner, their disapprobation of the conduct of his Majesty's Ministers,

sters, throughout the whole of these transactions, a conduct which, in their opinion, could lead to no other termination but that to which it seems to have been studiously directed—of plunging their country into an unnecessary war. The calamities of such a war must be aggravated, in the estimation of every rational mind, by reflecting on the peculiar advantages of that fortunate situation which we have so unwisely abandoned, and which not only exempted us from sharing in the distresses and afflictions of the other nations of Europe, but converted them into sources of benefit, improvement, and prosperity to this country.

We, therefore, humbly implore his Majesty's paternal goodness, to listen no longer to the councils which have forced us into this unhappy war, but to embrace the earliest occasion which his wisdom may discern, of restoring to his People the blessings of peace.

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